

## THURSTON REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL (TRPC)



Freight Access by Rail (FAR) Corridor Thurston

The Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) represents a fast growing, diverse region with urban, suburban, and rural land use and transportation needs. The seat of the state government, Thurston County serves as a physical link between the Seattle-Tacoma metropolitan region to the northeast and the rural regions to the south, west, and east.

The TRPC — covering 727 square miles — is a 15-member intergovernmental board serving as the area's MPO and RTPO. Representatives from the cities of Lacey, Olympia, Tenino, Tumwater and Yelm, the towns of Bucoda and Rainier, Thurston County, Intercity Transit, Port of Olympia, Griffin and North Thurston School Districts, the Nisqually Tribe, Timberland Regional Library, the Thurston Conservation District and the Evergreen State College comprise the Council.

### *Major Transportation Facilities:*

The primary transportation facilities of the region are I-5, US 101, and the Centennial Rail Station. Another critical service in this region is Intercity Transit. The I-5 corridor is the most heavily traveled freight corridor in the state. Most of the freight heading into or out of the central Puget Sound region passes through Thurston County via I-5 and/or US 101. A planned freight mobility strategy is

needed to address the movement of these goods and services. Otherwise increasing congestion on the I-5 corridor in Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater will have a detrimental impact in the region.

Travel demand management strategies, in conjunction with adopted land use plans and transit service levels, can achieve a 20 to 30 percent reduction in trips made by people driving alone in the urban corridors of Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater by 2020. If growth in travel demand continues at the current pace, there will be enough need by 2020 to warrant two to three additional lanes in each direction on I-5 through Thurston County.

Railroads serving this region are: Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Union Pacific, and Tacoma Rail Mountain Division. Amtrak provides passenger rail service.

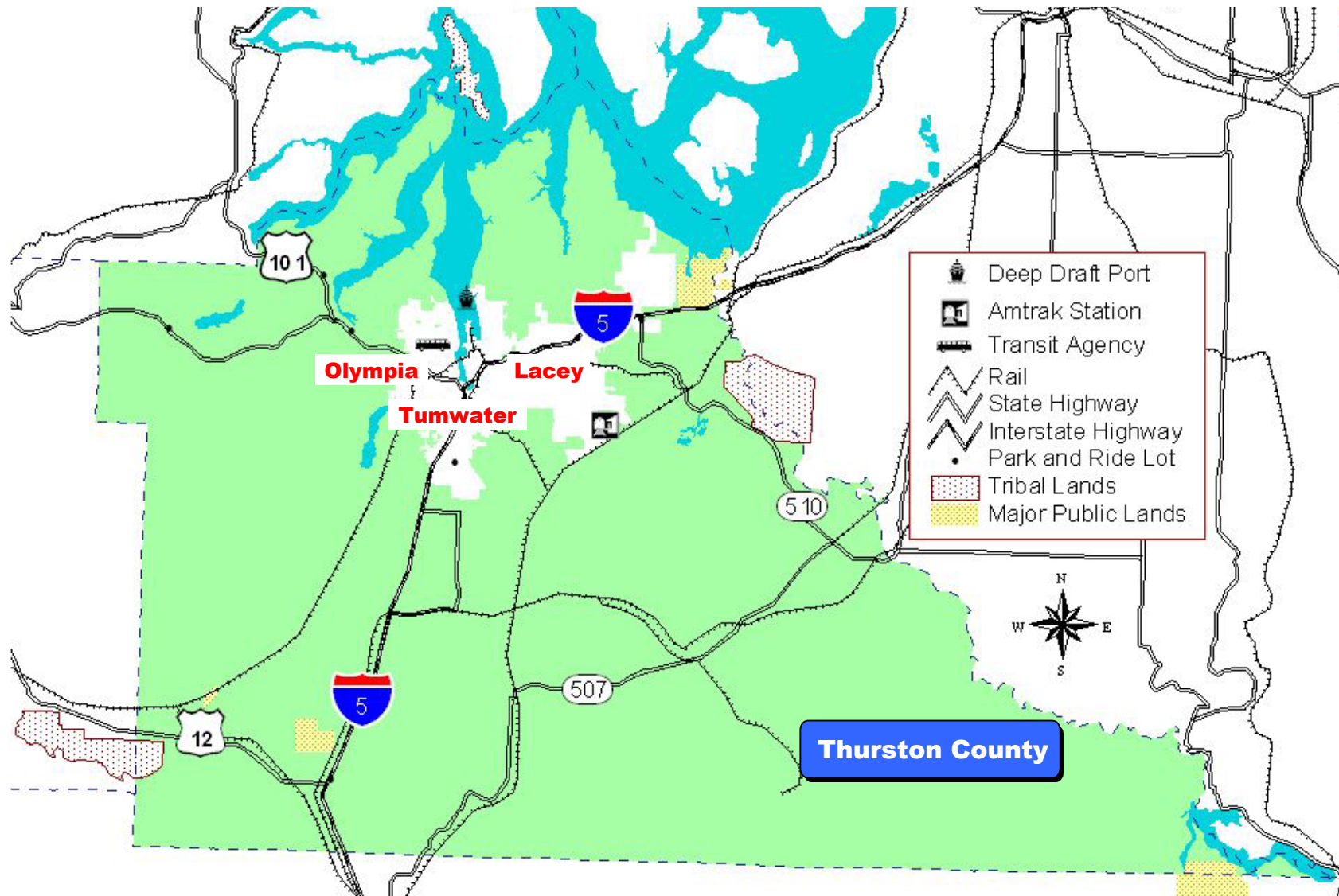
The type of freight that travels on the rails through this region is: intermodal trailers and containers, manufactured goods and merchandise, and lumber and lumber products.

### *Demographics:*

The county experienced a 23 percent increase in population from 1990 to 1997, with a

	Population (2000)	Persons Per Square Mile	Median Household Income (1997)
Washington State:	5,894,121	88.6	\$41,715
Thurston County:	207,355	285.2	\$42,360

corresponding 21 percent increase in employment. During the same period the region also experienced a 30 percent increase in vehicle miles traveled (VMT).



### Transportation Priorities:

The following list of issues and projects are reflected in the Transaction 2020: Thurston Regional Plan.

#### Reconstruction:

The February 2001 earthquake destroyed essential regional corridor and arterial facilities. An example of a project that addresses this problem is:

- Deschutes Parkway Seismic Retrofit Project.

#### Efficient System Management & Operations:

Cost-effective investments are needed to increase operating efficiency and preserve limited capacity on I-5. A project identified in the Regional Transportation Plan is:

- ITS example: Urban Area Investments in Traffic Monitoring ITS Technologies.



Deschutes Parkway Earthquake Damage

#### Integration & Connectivity Trails:

Construction of I-5 through the urban area of the Thurston region bisected Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater and other parts of Thurston County, reducing non-motorized travel opportunities for those neighborhoods, businesses, and employment centers on either side of the divide.

- TRPC seeks state and federal support for the Chehalis-Western Trail “Bridging the Gap” Project, which would build a non-motorized span connecting the north and south segments of the Chehalis-Western Trail.

#### Integration & Connectivity Park and Ride:

Lack of capacity at regional park and ride restricts opportunity for I-5 congestion relief and reduces commute options for Thurston County residents. A submitted TDM solution to this problem is:

- Expand Marvin Road Interchange Park & Ride to 400 stalls.

#### Safety:

Narrow travel lanes, insufficient access management, and lack of bicycle and pedestrian facilities conflict with modern urban land use current design standards, creating unsafe travel conditions.

- Martin Way Regional Corridor Retrofit addresses this conflict with land use design standards.

#### Economic:

Freight mobility in Western Washington is increasingly restricted by congestion on both the I-5 corridor and on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad mainline. A project submitted to address this issue is:

- Maximize use of publicly owned rail corridors as called for in the Freight Access by Rail (FAR) Corridor Study. The FAR Corridor alternative is likely the most cost-effective way of adding freight capacity to the I-5 corridor by upgrading under-utilized rail lines for non-priority freight trains.



Finance Need:

The deteriorating buying power of gas tax distributions to local agencies undermines the cost-effective preservation strategies of local roads and streets. Communities need a stronger financial base to maintain low life-cycle costs of these systems and to maximize taxpayer investments. A proposed solution to this problem is:

- Dedicate additional funds to pavement preservation programs and transit operations.



Chehalis-Western Trail

Accessibility & Mobility:

Lack of viable, convenient alternatives discourages people from using more efficient modes of transportation, and isolates those who do not drive. Examples of projects to address this issue are:

- Direct “Commuter Express” Transit Service from Olympia to Seattle.
- “South County Express” Service Providing Life-line Connections for Rural Communities.

Environment:

Traditional project development processes address environmental mitigation too late, which increases financial, environmental, and social costs, and diminishes opportunity for more sound solutions. An example of a project submitted to focus on this issue is:

- Pilot program integrating context sensitive design into regional project development process.

**Members:** Counties: Thurston

Cities: Olympia, Lacey, Tumwater, Tenino, and Yelm;

Towns: Bucoda and Rainier;

Transit Agencies: Intercity Transit;

Ports: Port of Olympia;

Tribal Nations: Chehalis Tribe and Nisqually Tribe;

School Districts: Griffin and North Thurston;

Other: Timberland Regional Library, Thurston Conservation District, and The Evergreen State College

State Agency: WSDOT

**TRPC Transportation Facts:**

- Commute Trip Reduction programs at Thurston County’s largest employers have:
  - Since 1994 reduced the number of commute miles that employees drive alone by more than 30,000 miles daily.
  - Since 1993 reduced particulate air pollution by more than 1,150 pounds per day.
- The daily commute in the region is expected to double within the next two decades.
- Intercity Transit in Thurston County currently has 63 vanpools in operation with plans to add 39 more vanpools.